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ABSTRACT

The universality of administrative functions and tasks is sufficiently established to make special preparation programs for any one group of higher education administrators unjustifiable. This thesis is based on research undertaken to determine if significant differences existed in the functions or tasks performed by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons in selected two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education. Questionnaire responses were received from 24 presidents, 28 vice-presidents, 25 deans, and 18 chairpersons representing 27 two-year colleges and 30 four-year institutions. The only differences that were found within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior college institutions--or in the operation of the key administrative positions within, between, and among these institutions--is in the frequency with which various administrative functions and related tasks are performed. For administrator preparation, these data suggest that separate programs to train two-year and four-year college administrators are unnecessary and that the theory of universality of administrative functions should be a keystone of administrator preparation programs. In addition, core areas and foundation courses are fundamental, and related disciplines such as industrial engineering, business administration and management, political science, and public administration have much to offer.
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PREPARING COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS:

FACT AND FANCY

Over whatever a man preside, he will, if he knows what he needs, and is able to provide it, be a good president, whether he have the direction of a chorus, a family, a city, or an army.... Do not therefor, ... despise men skillful in managing a household; for the conduct of private affairs differs from that of public concerns only in magnitude; in other respects they are similar.

Plato

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at the National Conference of Professors of
Educational Administration

Seattle, Washington
August 17, 1981

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Preparing College Administrators:

Fact and Fancy

Focus of the Paper

It is the thesis of this paper that the universality of administrative functions and tasks is sufficiently established to make special preparation programs for any one group of higher education administrators unjustifiable.

Strong words? Yes, certainly they are. The evidence, however, is persuasive. Departments of Educational Administration should temper program development activities with that evidence and should seek ways to test it.

This paper is based on the doctoral dissertation written by my former graduate student at Texas A&M University, Dr. Jerry Wilson. With rare exceptions the references are taken from Wilson's study. However for this presentation I have expanded the recommendations somewhat and Dr. Wilson accrues no responsibility for any inadequacy of that section of the paper.

RJS
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Preparing College Administrators:

Fact and Fancy

Introduction

In 1960 the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided ten of America's great universities with $1,600,000 to start up special programs for the preparation of community college administrators. Five of those programs are still in operation, funded primarily by the institutions. In the two decades since the Kellogg Foundation made its initial grant the programs have emphasized the preparation of Community/Junior College Administrators. Such an emphasis is understandable in view of the extraordinary growth in the numbers of two year institutions which were being established at that time. What is not as understandable is the position taken then and still subscribed to that community college administration is so different from other higher education administration that it requires a specialized program of preparation.

Some Historical Notes

The stage was set for this interesting rationale when, in 1959, the commission on Administration, American Association of Junior Colleges issued its "Guidelines for University Programs in Junior and Community College Administration." While the guidelines suggested that the relationship among all levels of higher education should be given consideration they also suggested the programs should emphasize the preparation of junior college administrators by developing the essential characteristics of junior college administration.

The implied difference in community/junior college administration was more

explicitly articulated by Moore who complained that "... the new two year college administrator is like a blind man on a freeway. His degree is little more than a white cane. He cannot depend on what he has learned to get him to his destination safely and with dispatch... virtually none of his training is in solving the practical problems of the community college." (2:4). Adding emphasis to this position Moore wrote categorically, "Many of the scholars who work in administrator training institutions cannot write a job description for and cannot define the role of the administrators they train; they cannot explain the essential differences between the administrative function in the four-year college or university and that function in the community college. To be sure, they do overlap. They are also quite different." (2:7).

Moore's comments were published ten years ago, and forces working on institutions and their administration have both changed and intensified since that time. Still it seems reasonable to try to respond to Moore's challenge to graduate programs to prepare higher education administrators. The challenge seems clear enough. "Is the graduate institution going to do any serious research to find out what kinds of specific skills are needed in the preparation of two year school administrators?" (2:31). The notion that graduate institutions are not doing an appropriate job is clearly spelled out by Moore when he continues "The Community College Administrator has a more comprehensive job than do the administrators at other levels of education, and nothing has been done to train him." (2:32).

A Contemporary Notion

The AACJC guidelines of 1959, the position taken by Moore, and the

continuation of specialized programs for preparing community college administrators argue collectively, if not individually, that the administration of community/junior colleges is somehow different from other higher education administration. I believe any differences which might exist are minimal and I believe the research which Moore asked to have done has been done and it shows that according to the community college administrators themselves, the differences are more fancy than fact. The most recent of the research I refer to was conducted by Wilson (6) and completed in August of 1980. Wilson's study addressed the fact that although evidence within administrative theory indicates that common functions and tasks exist across institutions (1) that evidence has not specifically included higher education. More particularly the literature does not address the applicability of the universality theory to junior colleges and senior colleges on a comparative basis. The research reported here was undertaken to determine if significant differences existed in the functions or tasks (see Appendix A for a list of the functions and tasks used in Wilson's study) performed by presidents, vice presidents of academic affairs, academic deans and department chairpersons in selected two-year and four-year public institutions of higher education. Presumably such a research effort would clarify current guesswork on this issue and would have considerable implications for program development activities for departments of educational administration involved in preparing administrators for higher education. It was further believed the findings would be of particular interest to those departments which maintain separate preparation programs for two-year college and senior college administrators on the assumption they perform different tasks and functions.

Four states were randomly selected to represent the population from each of the following geographic regions: the Middle Association, New England Association, North Central Association, and the Northwest Association. The states in each of these geographic regions were listed in alphabetical order and sequentially numbered. States selected for inclusion in the study were determined by random sampling using a table of random numbers (3:428).

From the first and third states selected from each geographic region the land grant college or university for those states was included in the sample. Land grant institutions were identified for inclusion in this study over other public senior college institutions for two reasons. First, land grant institutions were perceived to be similar in administrative structure and/or governance to other public senior college institutions and second, land grant institution administrators were identified to be more willing to respond to a research study originating from another land grant institution. Random selection of land grant institutions was not required because only one such institution existed in each of the selected states.

From the second and fourth states selected from each of the geographic regions a junior/community college, which met the administrative position requirements established for this study, was randomly selected. This process identified a number of junior/community colleges which did not have an administrative structure containing all four administrative positions of president, vice-president of academic affairs, academic dean, and department chairperson or an equivalent position indicated by another title. In those instances, where at least three of the four administrative

positions or their equivalent were not identified in any of the junior/community colleges within a selected state, another state from that accrediting region was randomly selected and the junior/community college random selection process was repeated until a suitable institution was found.

In the geographic region represented by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools the same procedure was used except that in the State of Texas all public junior/community and senior college institutions were alphabetized and sequentially numbered within each group. Half of the junior/community college group and half of the senior college group were selected by random sampling. These institutions were then checked against the administrative position criteria established for the study. Again, if at least three of the four administrative positions or their equivalent could not be identified, another institution was randomly selected. This process was continued until half of each institutional group was selected or until all possible institutions were considered.

The geographic region represented by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges included only the states of California and Hawaii. Two junior/community colleges from each of those states were selected by the random sample technique previously described. Since only one land grant institution was found in each of these states the need for random selection procedures was eliminated.

Twenty-four presidents, twenty-eight vice presidents, twenty-five deans and eighteen chairpersons returned the questionnaires in useable form. Twenty-seven two-year colleges and thirty four-year institutions were represented by the respondents.

The ninety-five highly specific research questions of the study can be grouped under five areas of investigation and stated as broader research questions.

1. Is there a significant difference in administrator perceptions of the administrative functions performed by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior colleges?

2. Is there a significant difference in administrator perceptions concerning whether or not a specified function should be performed by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior colleges?

3. Is there a significant difference in administrator perceptions of tasks required to perform administrative functions by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between and among public junior/community and public senior colleges?

4. Is there a distinctive set of administrative functions commonly identified by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior colleges?

5. Is there a distinctive set of tasks utilized in the performance of administrative functions commonly identified by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior colleges?

The following conclusions were drawn relative to these more general research questions.

Conclusions

In response to the first major area of investigation the data analysis revealed that 2 significant differences could be established from among 110 possible combinations concerning administrators perceptions of the frequency with which they do perform their functions. Since less than two percent of all possible comparisons indicated significant differences, it seems reasonable to conclude that in the first major area of investigation, significant differences, in general, do not exist. These findings are consistent with those of Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell (1) and lend support to the general theory of commonality of administrative functions.

In response to the second major area of investigation the data analysis revealed that 4 significant differences could be established from 110 possible combinations concerning administrators perceptions of the frequency with which they should perform their functions, and 5 significant differences could be established from 80 possible combinations concerning administrators perceptions of the frequency with which they do perform their functions compared to the frequency with which they should perform their functions. Since these data represent significant differences of less than four percent and less than seven percent, respectively, it seems reasonable to conclude that in the second major area of investigation, significant differences, in general, do not exist. These findings lend further support to the general theory of commonality of administrative functions and tasks.

Data from the third major area of investigation indicated that a total of 146 significant differences could be established from 3,680 possible

combinations concerning administrators perceptions of the frequency with which they do perform their administrative tasks. Since less than five percent of all of the possible comparisons involving administrators perceptions of the frequency of performance of administrative tasks indicated significant differences, it seems reasonable to conclude that in the third major area of investigation, significant differences, in general, do not exist. Again, these findings lend support to the general theory of commonality of administrative functions and tasks.

However, within this third major area of investigation, 124 significant differences were established for the 920 possible comparisons dealing with differences between the perceptions of junior/community college and senior college administrators regarding the frequency with which they performed their administrative tasks. Since nearly fourteen percent of these specific comparisons indicated significant differences, it seems reasonable to conclude that some significant differences do exist between junior/community and senior college administrators regarding these specific perceptions.

Additionally, it was found that a total of 244 significant differences could be established from 1,840 possible comparisons concerning junior/community and senior college administrators perceptions of the frequency with which they do perform their tasks compared to the frequency with which they should perform their tasks. Since over thirteen percent of these specific comparisons indicated significant differences, it seems reasonable to conclude that some significant differences do exist between junior/community and senior college administrators regarding these specific

perceptions. These findings tend to support the literature that purport differences exist (5, 7).

Data from the fourth major area of investigation indicated that a distinctive set of administrative functions was commonly identified by presidents, vice-presidents of academic affairs, academic deans, and department chairpersons within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior colleges. There were no respondents to the survey who either totally eliminated or added a function to the identified list of functions provided with the questionnaire. Since all of the survey respondents identified all of the listed functions as being performed by them and since all of the respondents identified all of the listed functions as functions that they should perform, it is reasonable to conclude that the administrative functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and leading, and controlling are common administrative functions for the positions of president, vice-president of academic affairs, academic dean, and department chairperson in both junior/community and senior college institutions.

Data from the fifth major area of investigation indicated that a distinctive set of administrative tasks was commonly identified by the respondents. None of the respondents either totally eliminated or added a task to the identified list of twenty-three tasks provided with the questionnaire. Since all of the survey respondents identified all of the twenty-three listed tasks as being performed by them and since all of the respondents identified all of the listed tasks as ones they should perform, it is reasonable to conclude that the administrative tasks, utilized in this study are common to the positions of president, vice-president of academic affairs, academic dean, and

department chairperson in both junior/community and senior college institutions.

One question of general interest that was asked of all respondents in the demographic portion of the survey, is worthy of special note. The question asked: Do you believe there are significant differences in the tasks and functions performed by key academic administrative officers in institutions of higher education? Over seventy-six percent of all respondents indicated the answer to this question to be "yes", while over eighty-six percent of all of the responding presidents indicated the answer to this question to be "yes". Since analysis of the responses from these same administrators indicated that significant differences, in general, do not exist in their perceptions of their administrative functions and tasks, it is interesting to speculate on the possible reason for their apparent disagreement with themselves. Because the questionnaire used in this study was very carefully and thoroughly validated and since the respondents agreed with the functions and tasks presented in the questionnaire, there seems to be only one plausible reason for the disagreement. The respondents do not have an accurate perception of the functions and tasks performed by their peers within their own or within other institutions of higher education.

Recommendations Regarding Program Development

The differences in role and scope claimed by both public junior/community college and public senior college administrators that supposedly set them apart from each other, appear to have little support from this study. In fact, the only differences that can be found within, between, and among public junior/community and public senior college institutions and/or in the operation of the key administrative positions within, between,

and among these institutions is in the frequency with which the various administrative functions and related tasks are performed.

This being the case it seems reasonable to suggest that program development activities in departments of educational administration should seriously consider the following propositions.

1. Separated programs to prepare two year and four year college administrators are unnecessary and unjustifiable drains of an institution's resources and are not supported by the weight of available evidence.
2. The theory of universality of administrative functions should be a keystone of efforts to develop programs to prepare higher education administrators.
3. The notion of core areas being fundamental to administrator preparation programs, regardless of specialization, is substantially supported by the research reported here and deserves serious consideration by those responsible for preparation programs.
4. The evidence supports substantial arguments that preparation program development efforts in educational administration have significant support available in related disciplines such as industrial engineering, business administration and management, political science and public administration. I am suggesting a relationship between these disciplines and educational administration which may well go beyond the level of our present "2 or 3 courses outside the major."
5. I think it not far fetched to suggest we need a renewed emphasis upon the role of foundations courses in administrative preparation.

Without this grounding the appropriate frame of reference in which to consider the identified functions and tasks is much less likely to be established.

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AND FUNCTIONS

Tasks

1. Account for funds
2. Administer
3. Analyze
4. Be knowledgeable of requirements and procedures for gaining approval and/or support
5. Budget funds
6. Consult
7. Coordinate
8. Determine short range goals and objectives
9. Determine long range goals and objectives
10. Delegate responsibility
11. Effectively communicate
12. Effectively utilize personnel and facilities
13. Encourage professional growth
14. Engage in development activities
15. Establish and implement plans
16. Evaluate or make assessments
17. Hire and fire personnel
18. Make decisions
19. Manage personnel
20. Promote ideas
21. Provide and foster cooperation
22. Provide input into policy making
23. Review

Functions

1. Planning
2. Organizing
3. Staffing
4. Directing and leading
5. Controlling (1)

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